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Unanimous Statement by Participants in the Final Session
of the Conference on Science and Human Responsibility
held at Washington University
October 18 to 28, 1954

The Conference on Science and Human Responsibility closes with firmly grounded hope. We recognize that not only great dangers but also great opportunities lie before us. An atmosphere of urgency has pervaded the Conference. We are presented with a deadline before which certain vital human questions must have answers, or disaster will overtake us. But we see progress toward these answers, in some cases rapid progress. The military stalemate and the technological relief of economic pressure are buying time to build a social structure which we dare hope will provide enduring peace with freedom.

A series of challenges with which mankind is faced has been brought sharply to our attention. Under conditions of relative peace, and with the aid of science and its use in industry and agriculture, we see the way of meeting to an increasing degree man's economic needs during the next few decades. For the longer future the world's prosperity will depend more upon the form of man's aspirations than upon the limitations of his technical knowledge.

The great strides of medicine during the past century continue unabated. These are giving new health and vigor to mankind. We face, however, the task of providing an adequate place in our society for more and more old people. The increasing control of infectious diseases and the mounting prevalence of mental disorders call for new approaches to the problems of health.

Recent developments in the field of law seem to place this vital regulator of society also at a point where one can now with greater

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confident draft laws that will carry weight and will be enforceable. This gives new urgency to the efforts toward making adjustments that will give greater freedom to individual communities, and toward reaching agreements among nations which will be useful and enforceable.

A great challenge to every agency of communication and education is to develop an understanding among nations and among groups within each national community which will make feasible the adjustment and cooperation needed for their proper growth. Studies of the factors influencing attitudes have shown how such understanding and adjustment can be developed. Thus the way is open for an education that will ensure harmonious peace.

If a strong and enduring social order is to be attained, men must find meaning in their lives. This point has been emphasized by many participants. Such meaning implies objectives that are considered worthy, and the need for each person to work toward achieving these objectives. An objective that seems acceptable and of vital importance throughout the free world is that every person shall have an opportunity to grow to his fullest stature. This vision is taking form in such documents as the United Nations declaration of human rights.

Providing an opportunity for the full growth of every person is a challenge for every member of a family, for every citizen with respect to his community, for every government with respect to its people, and for the international community of nations. We know the great sources of inspiration that can give the courage and the will to achieve this goal. Its attainment requires wise planning and creation of the necessary machinery. It appears to the members of this Conference that science is competent to find the knowledge, and that technology can create the machinery needed, to give every person his appropriate opportunity. Will men and women see in this task something of such importance that they will dedicate themselves to its achievement?

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The really pressing question is, can these challenges be met in time? The trend toward a devastating third world war must not be permitted to pass the point of no return. Before we are smothered by the economic pressure of a mounting population the world must set its human sights, draw its plans, and put these plans in operation. The knowledge and the strength to meet these great challenges are available. Whether we shall do so depends upon the spirit that is within us.

October 28, 1954

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